

E 392
.B85
Copy 1

*Deposited September 7. 1833
at Clerk's Off. South Dist. &c.*



A BRIEF SKETCH
OF THE
LIFE AND PUBLIC SERVICES
OF
WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON.

Compiled from Official Documents.





Class E 335

Book B 45

Copyright N^o

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.



3-14 42.

66 193

A

BRIEF SKETCH

11

OF THE

LIFE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

OF

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON,

AS

173
229

SECRETARY OF THE NORTH WESTERN TERRITORY, GOVERNOR OF THE INDIANA
TERRITORY, AND COMMANDER OF THE ARMY OF THE NORTH WEST,
REPRESENTATIVE, AND SENATOR IN CONGRESS, AND
MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY TO COLOMBIA,

WITH A SUCCINCT ACCOUNT

OF THE

BATTLES OF TIPPECANOE AND THE THAMES.

COMPILED FROM OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS.

"Honor and Gratitude to those who have filled the measure of their country's glory."
THOMAS JEFFERSON.

New-York :

PUBLISHED BY T. & C. WOOD, STATIONERS,
35 WALL-STREET.

.....

1835.

E392
585

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the office of the Clerk for the
Southern District of New-York, by T. & C. Wood.

2213

H. Wilbur, Printer, Green Street.

PREFACE.

THE fame of our country's Patriots and Statesmen is the dearest inheritance of every true-hearted American—its preservation, unsullied by the breath of calumny, untarnished by the venom of envy, among the most imperative as well as most grateful of his public duties. In all ages, the spirit of liberty and of glorious emulation in the cause of justice and of patriotism has been fostered and diffused by the contemplation of the lives and characters of those who have rendered themselves illustrious by their virtue, wisdom, and devotion to the welfare of their country. The poets and historians of the earlier ages were but rivals in the great work of presenting in the most inviting form to their countrymen, and embalming for the benefit of posterity, the events and the characteristics which had elevated the heroes and sages of their times so proudly above the level of the multitude; and the popular fatuity which worshipped the departed founder or preserver of a nation as a deity, was perhaps wisely countenanced by the more enlightened as a ready and effectual auxiliary in the great work of keeping alive the memory of their prowess or self-devotion, and inciting to an emulation of their valor or virtue, in the hope of rivalling their imperishable renown.

It is not necessary, even were it consistent with the purpose of the following narrative, to state in this place the causes which have combined to place Gen. Harrison more conspicuously before the American people, and to call for a recapitulation of those achievements which, scarce twenty years since, acquired for him the enthusiastic approbation and gratitude of the American people. Do they yet linger in the memory of the patriot of that hour of our country's peril? Then he will need no apology for their revival. Are they so soon forgotten? It is high time, then, that some memorial of their existence were again submitted to the contemplation of an intelligent, patriotic and grateful people.

NEW YORK, Sept. 1, 1835.

TO
THE OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS OF THE LAST WAR,
THE VICTORS
AT THE THAMES, AT CHIPPEWA, BRIDGEWATER, PLATTS-
BURGH, AND NEW ORLEANS;
THE DEFENDERS OF FORT MEIGS, FORT ERIE, AND
BALTIMORE,
THIS SKETCH IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY ONE WHO EXULTS AT THE REMEMBRANCE OF THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS,
WHO GLORIES IN THEIR WELL-EARNED FAME, AND IS PROUD
TO CLAIM THEM AS HIS COUNTRYMEN.

LIFE OF GEN. HARRISON.

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON was born at a plantation called Berkeley, on James River, in the state of Virginia, on the 9th day of ^{February} January, 1773. His father, Benjamin Harrison, was distinguished in the civil history of the Colony and State, but especially for his early, ardent and efficient devotion to the cause of American Liberty, as vindicated in the War of the Revolution. The first intimations of that great struggle found him in the undisturbed possession of wealth and honors, and surrounded by the blessings and responsibilities which are the portion of the head of a beloved and tender family, in a situation which might well have counselled to a brave man prudence and even to a patriot silence. But all selfish considerations were lost on the enthusiastic and high-minded Harrison. He had no thought but for his country; and in her cause he hesitated not a moment to peril life, property, and the happiness of those far dearer to him than either. Possessing talents of the highest order, and early distinguished for the zeal with which he portrayed the wrongs of his country, he soon inspired his fellow citizens with an unlimited confidence in his integrity and patriotism, and was elected to represent the State of Virginia in the Continental Congress.

He was continued in that capacity through the eventful years 1774, 1775, and 1776. In 1777, he declined a reelection to Congress, but was persuaded to accept a seat in the House of Delegates, of which he was immediately chosen Speaker. He continued to fill that station until 1782, when he was elected to the post of Governor of Virginia. It is not allowed us in this place to go into a detail of his services to his country, in these various capacities, throughout the whole period of the Revolutionary War. Suffice it to say here that he was ever ranked with the foremost of our country's statesmen in the discussion and determination of all matters of weighty and critical import. He was one of the three selected by Congress to proceed to the camp of Washington in 1775, and persuade the army to extend their time of service. He was again on the committee appointed to determine whether Philadelphia should be burnt, in view of the approach of an overpowering enemy. He was also Chairman of the celebrated and important Committee entitled the 'Board of War,' and likewise of that august and memorable assemblage by which the momentous subject of National Freedom was first formally debated; and his name was attached to that noble instrument which gave birth to a boundless and unrivalled empire. In that illustrious constellation of sages and patriots who quailed not before Britain's thunders will be found the name of Benjamin Harrison, as a signer of the immortal DECLARATION OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

Such were some of the public services of the father of General Harrison—the crisis, the peril and the result need not be dwelt upon. But he had the satisfaction of seeing the fruits of his labors, with those of his glorious compeers, eventuate in the establishment of the liberty, the happiness and the glory of his country on the broad and imperishable basis of freedom and equal rights. Full of years and of honors, he was gathered to his fathers, leaving to his children the wreck of an estate which the great conflict had dilapidated, and the proud inheritance of a patriot's fame.

William Henry Harrison was the third and youngest son of Benjamin Harrison. He left the College of Hampden Sidney, at which his education was completed, in his seventeenth year, having been pronounced by the principal well qualified for the study of Medicine, which was the profession his father had selected for him. After spending some time under the instruction of an eminent physician, he repaired in the spring of 1791 to Philadelphia to finish his studies; but before he had reached that city he was overtaken by the mournful intelligence of his father's death. An immediate revolution in his plans and prospects was the consequence. He determined at once to abandon a pursuit which was little congenial to his taste; and being soon after offered a commission in the army, he eagerly accepted it. His friends and acquaintances remonstrated, until they found his resolution inflexible, when they as ardently endeavored to afford him every facility for pursuing with honor the new path which he had chosen.

The regiment in which he was commissioned was employed in the defence of the North Western frontier, under the command of Gen. St. Clair. After devoting a few weeks to the recruiting service at Philadelphia, he hastened to join it. Although but a stripling of nineteen, tall, thin, and puerile in person, and apparently little qualified to brave the hardships to which a soldier's life is exposed, but more emphatically in the defence at that day of our North Western frontier against the hostility of our savage neighbors, our youthful ensign hastened to his post with the alacrity of enthusiasm, and tearing himself from friends and relatives and the 'thrice driven bed of down,' amid which his childhood had been nurtured, he prepared to court honor in the tented field and in the pathless recesses of the peril-fraught wilderness.

It must be confessed that the aspect presented by our Western frontier at this crisis, was not eminently calculated to brighten the hopes or confirm the prepossessions of a youthful and untried soldier. Ensign Harrison arrived at

Fort Washington on the Ohio, only a few days after the disastrous defeat of Gen. St. Clair's army by the Indians. The broken fragments of that unfortunate force were every day arriving at the Fort, naked, famished, and completely dispirited. It seemed almost an impossibility that they could again be reorganized and put in a condition to follow the foe into his own solitudes and fastnesses, or scarcely to guard from his exterminating ravages the scattered settlements of the frontier. Here, too, young Harrison was again met by the entreaties and remonstrances of friendship, depicting in lively colors the hardships he must necessarily encounter, with the trials and difficulties to which he must be exposed, and exhorting him to resign his commission and return to his home. But all such advice was unheeded. The course of honor and duty was open before him, and, even if his own inclination had been changed, he would have scorned to shrink from his country's service at such a crisis. He was soon after appointed to the command of a small detachment charged with the escort of provisions for Fort Hamilton, by a march through the wilderness, exposed not only to the attacks of a barbarous and now victorious enemy, but to incessant storms of rain, snow and wind, against which they had no protection, even for the night. After encountering all the difficulties, privations and hardships incident to such a service, our young officer accomplished it in such a manner as to elicit the public thanks of Gen. St. Clair.

Defeat, which is too often the precursor of despair, was to the Cabinet of Washington but the teacher of wisdom. The total discomfiture of Harmar, and St. Clair, which would have suggested to a weaker Government the propriety of abandoning our settlements to the Westward of the Ohio, if not of the Alleghanies, only pointed out to that of the Father of his Country the necessity of a more efficient organization and discipline of our army, and of a plan of operations better adapted to the nature of the warfare to be maintained. Ac-

cordingly, the whole of the year 1792 and the earlier portion of 1793 were devoted to the strengthening of our regiments and the perfecting of their discipline. The army was then placed under the command of Gen. Wayne, and, descending the Ohio River, encamped upon its right bank below Cincinnati, where Harrison joined the main body, and was appointed second Aid-de-camp to the Commander-in-Chief. The army, now amounting to near five thousand men, continued its march to Greenville, where, owing to the increasing severity of the weather, it was determined to go into winter quarters. Here the efforts to establish a high state of discipline were resumed; and young Harrison devoted himself to the theoretical and practical study of the art of war, with an assiduity and success which gained for him the confidence and esteem of his commander, as his urbanity, kindness and generosity had already secured him the affectionate regard of his associates.

With the approach of summer, 1794, Gen. Wayne marched from Greenville, with a force four thousand five hundred strong, and advanced to the attack of the hostile Indians. He came up with the main body of their confederated force at the foot of the Miami Rapids, in the immediate vicinity of the British forts then just erected there, in violation of the laws of nations and of the existing treaty. The enemy were soon routed and driven from the field to take shelter under the guns of their allies. In this battle, our young soldier, now a captain, was appointed by Gen. Wayne to assist in forming the left wing of the army—a task of extreme difficulty, owing to the thickness of the wood in which they were posted—but which he effected with such coolness and skill as to call forth the warmest acknowledgments from the General.

The vanquished Indians—beaten beyond the hope of ever taking the field with so great a force again—now sued for peace. A winter armistice was granted, and in August following a treaty was concluded which settled all difficulties and terminated the war.

On the departure of Gen. Wayne, in 1795, for the Atlantic States, Harrison was continued by him in his post of Aide-de-Camp, and left in the command of Fort Washington. But the complete termination of hostilities and the profound peace which now reigned unbroken along the whole line of the frontier, left little occupation in a military capacity for his active and enterprising spirit. Resigning, therefore, his commission, he was soon after appointed Secretary of the North Western Territory. He was about the same time married to the daughter of Capt. John Cleves Symmes, one of the most intelligent and distinguished of the hardy pioneers of the West.

In the year 1799, Wm. H. Harrison was elected a Delegate to represent the vast Territory North West of the Ohio in the Congress of the United States. While acting in that capacity, he was instrumental in procuring the adoption of many beneficial measures, but none of such momentous and lasting importance as that in which he was actively engaged, which eventuated in the adoption of the present system of regulating the survey and sale of the public lands. The beneficial effects of this system were felt as if by magic, in the immediate and rapid acceleration of the settlement of the West ; and Time, the great arbiter between Truth and its specious counterfeit, has but crowned with additional and still increasing glory the authors of that great and original measure of public policy. Perhaps no scheme of radical improvement was ever so splendidly successful, so universally approved and eulogized by those who experienced or witnessed its operation, or so richly entitled to the gratitude and blessing of generations unborn.

When the Indiana Territory, which now forms the State of Indiana, was formed out of a portion of the old North Western Territory, Harrison was appointed its first Governor ; and in that station he was retained throughout the Presidency of Jefferson and under that of Madison up to the surrender of Hull in 1812, when he was called to the command of the North Western Army. During an administra-

tion of twelve years, in a station which necessarily vested him with supreme and almost absolute civil and military power, not a murmur of disapprobation was ever heard from the people over whom he exercised the functions of a Governor, with the strong arm of a protector and the devoted watchfulness of a father. His attention was in a great measure devoted to the organization and discipline of the militia, the amelioration of the condition of the Indian tribes within the Territory, and the establishment of public schools and other facilities for the general diffusion of knowledge. It is not necessary that we go into a minute detail of the benefits which resulted from his administration. Suffice it that they obtained for him an unlimited and enduring popularity with the people of Indiana and the unqualified approbation of the General Government.

The year 1811, however, was signalized by an especial demonstration of his striking capacity and fitness for the station to which he had been called. In watching the aspects presented by the frontier, he had become convinced that another rupture with the savages could not long be postponed. The machinations of the brother chiefs, Tecumseh and the Prophet, had been successful in arraying all the tribes of the West in a grand combination against the United States. The usual preliminaries of an Indian war—the wanton and inhuman murder of many settlers, the sullen reserve and silent mustering of the savages, gave a cue to their intentions which could not be mistaken. General Harrison resolved to anticipate the blow which he could no longer hope to avert. Assembling, therefore, a force of about one thousand men, consisting mostly of Indiana militia and volunteers, with a few companies of regulars, he directed his march on the Prophet's town on the Wabash, as the grand focus of the mischief. He left Vincennes in October, and his last block-house, on the bank of the Vermilion, where he deposited his boats and heavy baggage, on the 3d of November, thence continuing his march through the

pathless wilderness. The country was diversified with prairie and woodland, and the enemy were occasionally seen peering through the bushes at our troops as they advanced, but falling back as soon as observed, and utterly refusing any communication, which was often requested.

The marches of the 3d, 4th, and 5th, brought the army within a dozen miles of the Prophet's town. The infantry advanced in two columns of files, with the cavalry and mounted riflemen disposed in front, flank and rear, according to the nature of the ground and the probability of an attack. At four miles distance from the town, the troops were halted and formed in order of battle. The U. S. infantry were placed in the centre, with two companies of infantry and one of mounted riflemen on each flank; and these composed the front line. In the rear of this line was placed the baggage, drawn up as compactly as possible, and immediately behind it a reserve of three companies of militia infantry. The cavalry formed a second line at the distance of three hundred yards in the rear of the former; while a company of mounted riflemen were pushed forward as an advanced guard at the same distance in front. To facilitate the march, the whole was then broken off into short columns of companies, ready to recover their places in line at a moment's warning. Thus appointed, the little army resumed its march, slowly and cautiously, waiting to beat up every covert which seemed calculated to favor an ambuscade, and changing its disposition to meet every change in the nature of the ground, until within a mile and a half of the town, where, on entering an open road a halt was ordered, and the army again drawn up in order of battle. During this advance, parties of Indians had been constantly hovering about on all sides; but every effort of the interpreter to open a conference with a view to a mutual understanding, had been wholly ineffectual. The savages constantly drew back when approached, and buried themselves in the recesses of the forest. On halting, these attempts were again

renewed, but with no better success. Thereupon, a Capt. Dubois, of the spies and guides, volunteered to carry a flag to the town, and was accordingly despatched, with instructions to request a conference with the Prophet. In a few minutes, however, a messenger returned from the captain to apprise the Governor that the Indians appeared on both his flanks, refusing to answer his inquiries, but beckoning him to go on, and manifestly endeavoring to cut him off from the army. He was of course recalled, and the Governor determined to encamp where he was for the night.

While he was engaged in tracing the lines for his encampment, however, Major Davies of the dragoons rode up with the information that he had penetrated to the Indian fields which surrounded their village—that the ground was entirely open and more favorable to military operations than that which the army now occupied—and that the Indians in front manifested nothing but hostility, and had answered every effort to bring them to a parley with contempt and insolence.

In compliance with the unanimous wish of officers and men, Governor Harrison ordered an advance in perfect battle array, determined to bring the contest, if such it must be, to an immediate issue. Besides, he was informed that he might thus obtain excellent grounds for an encampment, protected in rear by the river, and measurably from surprise on all other quarters by the improved grounds of the Indians. The interpreters were posted in front, with directions to open a conference whenever the Indians should manifest an inclination.

Matters were now approaching a crisis ; and the savages perceived that a brief time remained to them in which to determine either to fight or treat, unless they were prepared to abandon their village. Accordingly, before the army had advanced in this order above four hundred yards, three Indians approached the advanced guard, and requested an interview with the Governor, which they had hitherto so studiously avoided. One of them proved to be a chief in

high repute with the Prophet. He opened his mission with complaints that the rapid advance of the army had taken them by surprise—that they had been given to understand by the Delawares and Miamis sent to them by Harrison that he would not advance until he had received an answer to his demands, of which they were the bearers. That answer, they proceeded to assure him, was forwarded by the Potawatimie chief Winemac, who had accompanied his messengers on their return, but who must have missed him by taking the south side of the Wabash.

Of course, this dissimulation and falsehood was lost upon Harrison; but he concealed his suspicions, and, simply assuring them that he had no intention of attacking them unless they refused to comply with his former propositions, he announced his intention to go and encamp on the Wabash for the night, to be in readiness for an interview with the Prophet and his chiefs in the morning, when all differences would be amicably settled—in the mean time, no hostilities should be committed by either party. With this proposal the Indians seemed much pleased, and promised that its conditions should be faithfully complied with on their part.

The army resumed its march, and reached the cultivated grounds of the Indians about five hundred yards below their town; but as these grounds occupied the whole bank of the river, it was found impossible to encamp on it as had been contemplated, since no wood could there be procured. The troops continued their advance on the village; but before they had proceeded two hundred yards through the improved grounds a party of Indians sallied out, and, with loud exclamations, commanded them to halt. The Governor again demanded a parley, and again the same chief presented himself. The commander assured him that he had no disposition to encroach upon their grounds, but only wished to find an encampment affording the necessities of wood and water. The chief informed him that there was a creek to the northwest of their grounds, which would answer

his purpose ; and this was confirmed by the report of the officers despatched to examine it. Here, again, the mutual engagement for a suspension of hostilities was renewed, and the chief took his leave.

On reaching the ground indicated, Gen. Harrison perceived that, while affording excellent facilities for an encampment, it was also peculiarly calculated to favor a night attack by the savages. It was a piece of dry oak land, rising about ten feet above the level of the marshy prairie in front, (towards the town,) and nearly twenty above a similar prairie in rear, through which ran a small stream lined with willows and other brushwood. The bench of upland which intervened between these prairies gradually widened towards the forest, and narrowed to a point in the direction of the river, about one hundred and fifty yards beyond the right flank of the encampment. The two columns of infantry occupied the front and rear of this ground, at a distance of one hundred and fifty yards on the left flank, but diminishing of necessity to something less than one hundred on the right. The left flank was composed of two companies of mounted riflemen, numbering one hundred and twenty, under Major General Wells of the Kentucky militia, who served as major ; the right by a single company (Spencer's,) of eighty mounted riflemen. The front line was composed of a battalion of U. S. infantry under Major Floyd, flanked by three companies of militia. Another battalion of U. S. infantry formed the rear line, under Capt. Baen, acting as Major, and four companies of infantry under Lieut. Col. Decker. The regular troops of the line joined the mounted riflemen of Gen. Wells on the left, while Col. Decker's battalion formed an angle with Spencer's company on the right ; and two troops of dragoons were posted in the rear of the left flank, and another in the rear of the front line.

The order of encampment was very slightly varied from the above, to accommodate inequalities of ground, and this was also the order of battle, in case of a night attack. Each

man slept immediately opposite his place in the line. The troops were formed in single rank, or Indian file, since, in Indian warfare, where there is no shock to resist, one rank is nearly as good as two, while such formation gives a far greater extension of line, and, at the same time, lessens the effect of the enemy's fire. The general field order was that each corps, if attacked, should maintain its ground at all hazards until relieved. The dragoons were to parade dismounted, and, in case of an attack, to act as a corps de reserve. The camp was defended by two captain's guards of forty-six men each, and by two subaltern's guards of twenty men each,—the whole under the command of a field officer. Throughout the expedition, the troops were regularly called out an hour before day, and remained under arms until broad daylight. Such was the disposition for the night of the 6th of November.

On the morning of the 7th, Gov. Harrison was himself on the alert at a quarter before four, and was on the point of giving the signal for calling out the men, when the attack commenced on the left flank. The sentinels and camp guard were panic struck, abandoned their officer and fled into the camp, firing but a single gun; and the first alarm which the troops in that quarter had of the approach of the enemy, was given by the yells of the savages within a stone's throw of their line. Here, however, there was no panic. A portion of them seized their arms and flew to their posts on the instant, while the more tardy were forced to fight hand to hand with the enemy, at the doors of their tents. The storm first fell upon the two companies of U. S. infantry and mounted riflemen which formed the left angle of the rear line; upon these the fire was excessively galling, and they suffered severely before they could be relieved. Several of the Indians here penetrated completely through the lines, and one or two were killed within the camp itself. All the other companies were under arms before they were fired on.

The morning was cloudy and intensely dark; and the

fires, which had facilitated the formation of the lines, now served only to direct the aim of the enemy's rifles. They were of course promptly extinguished. Although nineteen twentieths of our entire force had never before been in action, yet all took their places, under the incessant fire and appalling yells of the savages, with a precision and coolness which did honor to the character of the citizen soldier. Gov. Harrison was instantly on horseback, and rode to the angle attacked, which had already suffered severely and was much broken. He ordered up two companies from the centre of the rear line, which were formed across the angle in support of those which had borne the first shock of the engagement. By this time, a heavy firing had commenced on the left of the U. S. infantry composing the front line, and on riding up, the commander found Major Davies forming the dragoons in their rear, according to the order of battle. Perceiving that the heaviest of the enemy's fire proceeded from a clump of trees only fifteen or twenty paces in front of the line, the Governor ordered Major D. to advance with his dragoons and dislodge them. Unfortunately, the gallantry of that intrepid officer prompted him to attempt the execution of the order with an inconsiderable detachment, which enabled the enemy to attack him on both flanks, while avoiding his front, and the Major fell mortally wounded, while his party was driven back upon the lines. The attack, however, was instantly renewed by Capt. Snelling at the head of a company of infantry, and this time with entire success. By this time, though but a few minutes had elapsed since the opening of the engagement, the attack had become general along the whole of the front, right and left flank, and a part of the rear line. Two companies on the right of the rear were especially exposed, losing both captains (Spencer and Warwick,) and two lieutenants, killed or mortally wounded. These were also reinforced, and gallantly maintained their ground, notwithstanding the severity, of their loss.

The first object of Gov. Harrison was thus accomplished—to reinforce and support his lines at all points violently assailed, or peculiarly assailable, and to maintain them unbroken while the impenetrable darkness rendered a charge impracticable or certain to eventuate in disaster. With the first dawn of day, he silently and imperceptibly withdrew several companies from the front and rear lines, and concentrated them on the flanks, in readiness for an effectual charge, and to oppose the last efforts of the enemy, which he foresaw would be made on these quarters. As a precaution, however, it proved hardly necessary. The attack of the enemy was repelled with great spirit, and without for an instant losing a foot of ground. Major Wells, who commanded on the left flank, then charged full upon the enemy in that quarter, as soon as the light was sufficient, driving them before him at the point of the bayonet; and the dragoons, who had been hastily formed for that purpose, by Harrison, pursued them into a marsh, through which they could not be followed. At the same time, Capt. Cook and Lieut. Larabee (the general officers being nearly all killed or disabled,) marched their companies to the right flank, formed them under the fire of the enemy, and, in conjunction with the riflemen on that flank, charged the Indians, killed many, and put the rest to flight. An excellent opportunity was here afforded for a charge of dragoons on the flying foe; but they, with the commander, were warmly engaged on the other flank, and the favorable moment was not improved. As it was, however, the victory was ample and decisive. The enemy acknowledged their complete discomfiture and abandoned their village.

Thus terminated the celebrated and hard-fought battle of Tippecanoe, in which the Indians, led on by the ablest chiefs of the age, maintained a regular conflict for two hours with a disciplined and well appointed force, about equal in number to their own—an incident not often paralleled. It must be remembered, however, that they were strongly favored

by the darkness—that they fought on ground perfectly familiar to them, but with which their antagonists were utterly unacquainted—that they chose their own time and manner, and almost their own place for the engagement. They did not, however, reap the advantage on which they had calculated, of lulling their opponent to sleep by their perfidy or surprising him by their treachery; and the very fact that they were permitted, or enabled, to continue the contest till daylight, only redoubled the certainty and aggravated the consequences of their defeat. The result completely dissipated the formidable combination which the Shawnese chiefs, Tecumseh and the Prophet, had been for a long time forming against the peace of the frontier. Most of the tribes immediately sent in their submission. It was proved soon after that the enemy had dogged the steps of the expedition from its outset—that they had contemplated an attack at Fort Harrison, and at the intermediate points, but were disconcerted by some unexpected movements of our troops.

Of course, such a victory could not have been won, under such circumstances, without a very considerable loss. One hundred and eighty-eight of our men fell in that day's engagement, including one Colonel, two Lieutenant Colonels, a Major, six Captains, and five Lieutenants. The Governor's Staff was almost annihilated, and he himself received a ball through his hat, which slightly wounded him in the head. The loss of the enemy must have been still greater, notwithstanding that they fought principally under cover, and had every advantage in directing their fire. But the loss of the battle was far more disastrous than that of some hundred warriors; and many years must yet elapse before time and the current of absorbing events shall efface from their minds the bitter remembrance of the ensanguined field of Tippecanoe.

The breaking out of war with Great Britain, and the disastrous and disgraceful issue of the expedition of Hull, in

the year following the events last mentioned, again involved the young West in the perils of a defensive warfare, and again called into exercise the courage and devotion of her patriotic sons. By the surrender of Detroit, the whole weight of the savage tribes of the North-West was thrown into the scale of the enemy and precipitated upon our defenceless frontier. The eyes of the entire West were directed to their beloved Harrison as their Chieftain, whose banner was to marshal them to victory, and to efface the memory of that act of unaccountable cowardice or treachery which had shrouded the nation in gloom, and tarnished for a season the honor of the American name. The Government was not slow to perceive and to gratify the general desire ; and he was accordingly appointed forthwith to the command of the North-Western Army, with directions to advance to Detroit, and even to reduce Malden, before the close of the season, if it should be found possible. But the difficulties of organizing a sufficient force from the ardent but wholly inexperienced volunteers who now flocked in thousands to their country's standard, and of transporting them with all their means of subsistence and of offensive warfare, through the immense forest which separated the Ohio from the lakes, in the face of a victorious enemy and his barbarian allies, were not easily surmounted. While the General was proceeding, with the greatest energy, in the execution of the plan which had been marked out for him, a hasty and ill-advised movement by Gen. Winchester upon the river Raisin, contrary to the remonstrances of Harrison, was followed by the defeat and capture of the officer in command, and the entire frustration of the plan of the campaign.

All hope of retaking Detroit was, for that season, over. There remained only to transport back again, with great trouble and cost, the provisions and stores which had been forwarded nearly to the frontier,—to abandon them to the enemy,—or to defend them where they now were, in readi-

ness for the opening of a new campaign. The latter was the choice of Harrison. Selecting a position at the foot of the Miami Rapids, so as to completely command the navigation of the river, he formed there a general depot for the artillery, provisions, and military stores, and erecting such defences as the nature of the case would admit of, he gave it the name of Fort Meigs, in compliment to the worthy and patriotic Governor of Ohio. Here the whole *materiel* of our army for the ensuing campaign was deposited.

Gen. Proctor, who commanded the British force in Upper Canada, with his head quarters at Detroit, had been ordered to reinforce the Niagara frontier, with all the disposable troops at his command. He did not deem it advisable, however, to weaken his position at Detroit, while a formidable enemy remained in its neighborhood; and he determined to attack and reduce Fort Meigs, destroy the stores there collected, and thus avert the danger with which he was himself threatened, and then he could with safety comply with the order which summoned him to the relief of the Lower Province. On the first suspicion of this design, Gov. Harrison flew to the defence of the Fort; where he arrived on the 22d of April, 1813. The haste of his march had only enabled him to call around him a body of three hundred men; and his whole force, when he took command of the Fort, did not exceed fifteen hundred, of whom full one-third were on the sick list, throughout the siege. This force was entirely inadequate to the importance of the post or the number of its assailants, and a requisition had been made on the Secretary of War for a reinforcement, but it was not attended to. It was now too late to retrieve such errors. Gen. Harrison had no course left but to throw himself into the Fort, determined to defend it from the enemy or to bury himself beneath its walls.

But little time remained for preparation. New batteries were erected on the instant; the officers, as well as soldiers, worked incessantly in the trenches; and in three

days the Fort was placed in a respectable posture of defence. It was not a moment too soon. The enemy made his appearance on the 27th; on the 28th, the place was completely invested; and on the first of May the cannon of the assailants awakened the echoes of the forest.

The defence of Fort Meigs has been pronounced by competent judges the most brilliant exploit performed by our armies during the war. Aside from the great disproportion of force—the besiegers having an effective force of at least three to one—and the well known character of a hastily erected fort in the wilderness, Gen. Harrison found, on taking command, that he had no more than six hundred cannon shot of all sizes! for the defence of a besieged fortress—the War Department, not dreaming of such an attack, having made no preparation to resist it. However, the General kept this astounding deficiency a profound secret, simply giving out that he should not harass his men by unnecessary firing.

The enemy was fully aware of the value of time, and of the absolute necessity of reducing the fort at once or abandoning the enterprise. His batteries played upon it with great spirit, from the 1st to the 5th of the month; while, from the want of ammunition, the fire was but feebly answered from the fort, and the besiegers were thus enabled to push their advances with impunity, under the very guns of its defenders. The General's quarters were in the centre, decidedly the most exposed position in the fort. During the siege, several shot passed through his marquee, two or three of his servants were wounded, and Capt. McCulloch, who was sitting by the fire with the Commander, had the back part of his skull carried away. Gen. Harrison's fare was invariably that of the common soldiers; and in no night during the siege did he devote more than an hour to repose.

When the General flew to the defence of the menaced fort, he made a requisition on the Governor of Kentucky for

fifteen hundred militia, to assist in repelling the enemy. Of these, however, only a part of a battalion joined him before the investment, while the remainder descended the St. Mary's and Au Glaize, as convoys to urge supplies on their way to the Lake. An express sent to Gen. Clay to hasten his march, found him at Fort Winchester, with his brigade reduced by detachments and by sickness, to about eleven hundred effective men. To offer battle to an enemy of three times that number, would hardly be justified by the character of his force; while an attempt to throw himself into the fort seemed almost necessarily to involve that issue. Nevertheless, he resolved to hazard it; and accordingly sent word to Harrison that he should make his appearance on the morning of the 5th, between three o'clock and day-break. He did, not, however, arrive in the vicinity until nine o'clock, having been delayed by heavy rains and darkness, and by the refusal of his pilots to enter the rapids of the Miami, which are eighteen miles in length. Meantime Gen. Harrison, perceiving an opportunity to profit by the ignorance and remissness of the enemy, despatched another messenger to Gen. Clay, directing him to land six or eight hundred men on the north bank of the river above the enemy's batteries, with orders to march down under cover of the woods, and, taking the besiegers by surprise, storm their works, spike their cannon, blow up their batteries, and retreat with all celerity to their boats; but if that were found impracticable, to file off under the foot of a hill where they would be protected by the guns of the fort. This enterprise should have been entirely successful, notwithstanding the unfortunate and unavoidable delay; and, so far as surprising the batteries and spiking the cannon, it was executed without the loss of a man; but Col. Dudley, who commanded the detachment, finding himself momentarily master of the field, forgot that he was in the neighborhood of an immensely superior foe, refused to blow up the batteries, and suffered himself to be amused by a handful of

Indians, and drawn off into the bushes and swamps in pursuit of them, in direct violation of his orders. The consequences were such as might have been expected. The enemy brought a force of overwhelming superiority from the camp, cut off his retreat to the boats or to the fort, and compelled a great portion of his corps to surrender. Harrison made the most determined efforts for his relief, but without effect. Three sorties were made from the fort, in one of which two batteries were carried, the cannon spiked, and a number of prisoners taken. But the spirit of these demonstrations fully convinced Gen. Proctor of the impossibility of prosecuting the siege to a successful issue; and he accordingly raised it and prepared for a precipitate retreat, which he effected on the 9th of May.

The tide of ill fortune with which our arms had thus far struggled from the very commencement of the war was now effectually turned. The clouds which had gathered darkly over the sun of American glory were now dissipated, and the eye of the patriot again beamed with gratitude and the hope of victory. The preparations of our Government were at length completed, and the gallant spirits of the West flocked in thousands to the banner of their country, when they learned that it was to be borne onward to new triumphs by the valor of their Harrison. He was very soon enabled to assume the offensive, and, following in the track of the retreating enemy, he arrived at Detroit at the close of September, only to learn that Proctor had evacuated it without waiting for the appearance of an enemy, though in opposition to the urgent remonstrance of Tecumseh and the Indians generally, who stigmatized his conduct as cowardly, as well as perfidious in relation themselves. Fort Malden and Sandwich, on the British side, were also abandoned by the enemy, and only a few Indians appeared to oppose the crossing of the strait, which was of course effected without loss. Having hastily placed every thing at those posts in a suitable posture, Gen. Harrison left Sand-

wich with three thousand five hundred men, and following the course of the Thames, determined to overtake and vanquish the enemy. He had learned that Proctor had taken post at a distance of fifty-six miles inland, where he was engaged in fortifying himself, but with so little expectation of being followed that he had neglected to break down the bridges on the road by which he had retreated. Gen. Harrison hastened to take advantage of this oversight. Of the four which intervened, he found the first entire; at the second, he captured an officer with a small detachment which had been sent to destroy it, before they had accomplished their purpose. Here he learned that the third had been broken up, and that the enemy had no certain knowledge of the advance of the American army.

Pursuing the course of the Thames for some distance further, he found that the stream became narrower and far less favorable to navigation, and that the gunboats, which had hitherto conveyed the baggage, were fast becoming a serious impediment to the celerity of his advance. He therefore determined to leave them under a strong guard, hasten his march, and trust to the bravery and conduct of his troops in effecting their passage over the river. At the third unfordable stream, the bridge had been wholly demolished, as he was already aware, and several hundred Indians appeared to dispute the passage, commencing a heavy fire from the opposite bank of the creek, with a cross fire from the other side of the river. Two six-pounders were immediately brought up, which soon routed the savages, and served to cover the workmen who were engaged in throwing a temporary bridge over the stream. As soon as our army had made good their passage, the enemy retreated, after having set fire to their vessels, containing an immense quantity of military stores which they could transport no further. A great portion of them, however, were rescued from the general conflagration by our troops.

The next impediment encountered was a rapid in the

Thames, at a place called Arnold's Mills, where it was necessary to cross the river. The General hastily collected a few boats and canoes which were found in the vicinity, and, directing each horseman to take a man of the infantry behind him, he had his whole army across by mid-day. He was now within twelve miles of the enemy's position, and, advancing eight of these, and receiving some general information with regard to his force, he directed Col. Johnson to push forward with the mounted regiment and procure further intelligence. In a short time, the officer reported that his advance had been obstructed by the enemy, who were formed directly across his line of march.

Gen. Harrison immediately formed his troops in order of battle, with an ability and profound forecast which has never been exceeded. The enemy were strongly posted on the bank of the Thames, with their right resting on that river, where their artillery was stationed; their left, consisting of their savage allies, defended by a wooded swamp, and their centre, consisting of their regular infantry, protected by a beach forest. The General saw that to attempt to outflank the enemy's wings was of course impracticable, while to attack them in front must prove equally difficult, tedious, and, even if fully successful, must be attended with great loss. He therefore determined on a manœuvre without parallel in the annals of ancient or modern warfare. He perceived that the key to the whole position was its centre, and that in that quarter alone was it vulnerable to an impetuous and decisive attack. Knowing well the excellence of the volunteer corps of mounted riflemen, their unrivalled capacity for forest service, where ordinary cavalry would be totally useless, he determined to break the British lines, by determined charge of Col. Johnson's Kentuckians full on the centre of their position. He therefore directed that this regiment should be drawn up in close column, with its right at the distance of fifty yards from the wood, and still further from the river, so as to be protected by the forest from the

enemy's artillery, and its left upon the swamp which formed the right of the enemy's position. The infantry were drawn up in two lines, confronting the entire force of the British; its right, under the venerable Gov. Shelby of Kentucky, resting on the river; its left, under Gov. Trotter, extending to the swamp; the brigade of Gen. Desha in the centre; Gen. King's brigade forming the second line one hundred and fifty yards in the rear of the first—and that of Gen. Chiles forming a corps de reserve in the rear of the whole. Gen. Harrison in person commanded the front line of the infantry, which advanced slowly and in good order in support of the more rapid advance of the mounted men. Commodore Perry and Gen. Cass acted as his Aids. Col. Johnson was directed to advance deliberately until he had received the first fire of the enemy, and then charge at full speed, rifle in hand. The army had advanced but a short distance in this order when a full volley from the British lines gave the appointed signal; but the horses in the front line recoiled, and another volley was given before they could be brought to the charge. The whole of our first line now advanced regularly to the attack; the riflemen charged with impetuosity, and broke through the British lines on the instant, their speed scarcely checked by the encounter. The enemy were completely surprised and confounded. The officers attempted to rally their men and re-form them; but the mounted men wheeled upon them and poured in a destructive fire which decided the contest. The British infantry threw down their arms and surrendered.

On the flanks, however, the contest was maintained for some time with great spirit, by the Indian allies of the enemy. On the left, where Col. Johnson himself commanded, a desperate attack was led on by Tecumseh in person, and the battle raged for some moments with absolute fury. On the right, an impression was made on the division of Gen. Desha by the resolute charge of the savages; but the

veteran Governor of Kentucky advanced opportunely to his assistance, and quickly turned the fortune of the day in that quarter. The enemy were completely routed at all points and driven from the field with great loss, leaving the whole of their regular infantry prisoners. Gen. Proctor and his suite escaped by the fleetness of their horses. Tecumseh was killed in the battle, though his body was carried off by his people. Popular report has asserted that he fell by the hands of Col. Johnson, who behaved with great gallantry in the action, as did all our officers engaged; but the Colonel himself disclaims all knowledge of the assumed fact. No attempt was made to take prisoners of the Indians—the General being aware that the result of the battle would bring them voluntarily to his camp, suing for peace and alliance, as the event fully proved. The power of the enemy in Upper Canada and among the Indian tribes of the North-West, over whom their influence had been unlimited for years, was completely annihilated, and was never renewed during the war. All their artillery, munitions, and baggage fell into our hands; and among the cannon were six brass field pieces bearing the inscription ‘Surrendered by Burgoyne at Saratoga,’ which had been retaken by the enemy at the surrender of Detroit by Hull. Five thousand stand of small arms were either captured by the victors or destroyed by the enemy. In this brilliant engagement—the most decisive, perhaps the most glorious, which took place in the course of the war—the number engaged on either side did not vary materially from 3,500; and, though the character of our force was unquestionably superior to that of the enemy, it must be remembered that this superiority was amply compensated by the advantages of the enemy’s position.

After the victory of the Thames, Gen. Harrison was appointed to the chief command of the Eighth Military Division of the United States, embracing the section which he had so gallantly defended; but there no longer remained

any enemy to conquer. The completeness of his success had left him no further opportunity of distinguishing himself in the military service of his country. At the close of the war, he resigned his commission, and retired to his farm in the North Bend of the Ohio, a few miles below Cincinnati. Here he devoted himself to agricultural pursuits and the society of his friends, until he was elected, in 1816, to represent the district in the National House of Representatives. He distinguished himself in Congress by originating and zealously maintaining a plan for the better organization of our militia, which he deemed the only proper and safe defence of a republic, and which his experience had proved abundantly efficient for that purpose when directed by a commander of address and ability. Upon the death of the Polish patriot Kosciusko, the compatriot of Washington and the men of the Revolution, he offered a resolution in honor of his memory, which he supported in an eloquent and classical speech,* which has been ranked among the most brilliant efforts of Congressional oratory. At the end of his term, he declined a re-election and returned to the cultivation of his farm. But in 1822 he was elected to represent the State of Ohio in the Senate of the United States, and continued in that station until 1828, with unbounded popularity and influence. In the latter year, he was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Colombia, but was recalled, purely on partisan grounds, in 1829, before the news of his arrival at Bogota had reached this country. Since his return, he has resided on his farm in Ohio, maintaining a large family by the labor of his hands, removed from the political commotions by which the country has been convulsed, and scorning the paltry artifices and petty intrigues by which political distinction is too often so unworthily obtained. Enjoying, in a serene contentment and the conscious rectitude of an honest heart, the evening of a life he has devoted to the service of his country, he has

* See Niles' Register, 1817.

rather shunned than sought the enthusiastic testimonials of a nation's gratitude which have been spontaneously showered upon him ; and it is only within the last few months that he has yielded to the pressing solicitations of the generous sons of the West in partaking of the public hospitalities which have been pressed upon his acceptance, and thrilling their impassioned spirits with the fervid tone of his manly eloquence.

Such is a brief outline of the life and public services of William Henry Harrison, the veteran Patriot, Soldier, and Statesman, whose long career of indefatigable and eminently successful public services has won for him the glorious and well merited appellation of the Washington of the West. Its whole course does not exhibit a single instance in which the confidence reposed in him, the power with which he has been vested, has not been wielded for the best interest of his country—not merely to the full satisfaction of his superiors and his countrymen, but often with the most brilliant and unexpected success. Can it be pretended that accident, or any thing but consummate ability combined with the most inflexible determination, could have ensured such an uninterrupted series of good fortune ? It was the remark of an envious courtier to the great Louis XIV., that “ Marshal Villiers (who had just won several great battles,) was very lucky.” “ Lucky !” was the indignant retort of the Grand Monarque ; “ no, sir ! he is above that !”

The conduct of General Harrison, throughout his long and arduous public career, alike commands the admiration of his countrymen and challenges the scrutiny of his enemies, if he have any. In all the difficulties by which he has at times been surrounded—amid all the responsibilities of an independent command, at the distance of more than a thousand miles from the seat of government, forced to provide as well as rely upon his own resources, to act in all emergencies upon the suggestions of his own mind and to look for justification to the consequences, he has never found it

necessary or expedient to violate the constitution or laws of the land. Securing the unlimited confidence of the government by his integrity, capacity, and energy—of his associates by his warm-hearted generosity and winning sauvity—of his soldiers by ever being foremost in peril, privation, and exposure to the elements—and even of his enemies by his well-known magnanimity and kindness to the unfortunate—he may look with a proud confidence to the whole body of his countrymen for a confirmation of the unanimous verdict of all who have known him, to set the seal of reprobation on the envious tongue of detraction, and to encircle the brow of an illustrious patriot with a yet brighter and enduring halo of glory.

NOTE.—The compiler of the foregoing sketch acknowledges his obligation to a Biography of Gen. Harrison, which appeared in the Portfolio of 1814, as also to several briefer sketches of a more recent date. For a corroboration of the leading points of his narrative, the reader will consult Niles' Register, Vol. IX. to XII., or any other general collection of official documents. For a more circumstantial account of the battle of Tippecanoe, see Niles' Register, Vol. IX. p. 301-5; for the defence of Fort Meigs, see Register, Vol. IV, 192. for Battle of the Thames, see Register, Vol. V. 130.

APPENDIX.

Resolution of the Kentucky Legislature,—1811.

“Resolved, That in the late campaign against the Indians on the Wabash, Governor W. H. Harrison has, in the opinion of this legislature, behaved like a hero, a patriot, and a general; and that for his cool, deliberate, skilful and gallant conduct in the battle of Tippecanoe, he deserves the warmest thanks of the nation.”

Resolution of the Congress of the United States,—1813, introduced by Mahlon Dickerson, now Secretary of the Navy, and passed unanimously.

“Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the thanks of Congress be, and they are hereby presented to Major-General William Henry Harrison, and Isaac Shelby, late Governor of Kentucky, and through them to the officers and men under their command, for their gallantry and good conduct in defeating the combined forces, under Major General Proctor, on the Thames, in Upper Canada, on the fifth day of October, one thousand eight hundred and thirteen, capturing the British army with their baggage, camp equipage, and artillery, and that the President of the United States be requested to cause two gold medals to be struck, emblematic of this triumph, and presented to General Harrison and Isaac Shelby, late Governor of Kentucky.”

Characteristics of Gen. Harrison, from the Portfolio,—1815.

“It was Gen. Harrison’s constant practice to address his troops, personally, believing it to be more effectual than the common mode of general orders. He never omitted an opportunity of setting his troops

the example of cheerfully submitting to those numerous and severe privations incident to the carrying on of military operations, in an almost trackless desert, and in the most inclement seasons.

“During the campaign on the Wabash, the troops were put upon a half a pound of bread per day. This quantity only was allowed to the officers of every rank, and rigidly conformed to in the General’s own family. The allowance for dinner was uniformly divided between the company, and not an atom more was permitted. In the severe winter campaign of 1812–13, he slept under a thinner tent than any other person, whether officer or soldier, and it was the general observation of the officers, that his accommodations might generally be known by their being the worst in the army. Upon the expedition up the Thames all his baggage was contained in a valise, while his bedding consisted of a single blanket, fastened over his saddle, and even this he gave to Colonel Evans, a British officer who was wounded. His subsistence was exactly that of a common soldier.

“On the night after the action upon the Thames thirty-five British officers supped with him upon fresh beef roasted before the fire without either salt or bread, and without ardent spirits of any kind. Whether upon the march or in the camp, the whole army was regularly under arms at day break. Upon no occasion did he fail to be out himself, however severe the weather, and was generally the first officer on horseback of the whole army. Indeed he made it a point on every occasion, to set an example of fortitude and patience to his men, and to share with them every hardship, difficulty, and danger.”





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 895 515 8

